

NUMENIUS TENUIROSTRIS (Vicill.). Slender-billed Curlew.  
Seen in Cairo market on Jan. 22nd. Rather a rare species  
in Egypt.

RHYNCHÆA CAPENSIS (Linn.). Painted Snipe.

Unusually abundant this winter in the market both at  
Cairo and Alexandria.

XLIII.—*Notes on some Birds from the higher mountains of Nyika, west of Lake Nyasa, British Central Africa, with a description of a new Species of Francolin (Francolinus crawshayi).* By W. R. OGILVIE GRANT. *With Field-Notes by* RICHARD CRAWSHAY.

(Plate XII.)

THROUGH the kindness of Mr. Richard Crawshay, who has recently returned to England from British Central Africa, the National Collection has recently received several rare and interesting birds from the highlands of Nyika, which lie to the west of Lake Nyasa. Among the specimens brought home is a Francolin which is certainly undescribed, and I therefore propose to name it, in honour of its discoverer,

FRANCOLINUS CRAWSHAYI, sp. n. (Plate XII.)

This Francolin, at present only known from a male, is most nearly allied to *F. levaillanti*, and must be placed along with that species in the section of the key which reads: "e<sup>6</sup>. Black and white superciliary stripes meet at the back of the head, and are confluent on the nape." [Cf. Grant, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xxii. p. 129 (1893).] This character alone is sufficient to separate the present species from *F. gariepensis* and other nearly allied forms, and up to the present time *F. levaillanti* has occupied a somewhat isolated position, the section of the key quoted above serving to distinguish it from all other members of the genus. *F. crawshayi* may be at once recognized by the following characters:—The lower pair of bands on the sides of the face, commencing just above the angle of the gape, are mostly pure white, though some of



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FRANCOLINUS CRAWSHAYI

the feathers are narrowly tipped with brownish black; from these bands the pure white chin and throat are divided and bordered by a wide, dull, rust-coloured band, commencing at the angles of the gape; the fore part of the neck is mostly white, only a few of the lowest feathers being barred with black; the chest and sides of the breast mostly dark chestnut with pale buff shafts; the middle of the breast and belly nearly uniform buff, with a few blackish-brown marks on the outer feathers. The tarsus is considerably longer (1·9 as compared with about 1·7 inch). In other respects the plumage is very similar to that of *F. levaillanti*.

Total length 11 inches, wing 6·5, tail 2·75, tarsus 1·9.

The type specimen, a male from Cheni-Cheni mountain, in Nyika, W. of Lake Nyasa, was obtained at an altitude of 7400 feet, on the 27th June, 1895.

Mr. Richard Crawshay has kindly furnished me with the following note on this species:—

“This new species of Francolin, from British Central Africa, inhabits the higher mountains of Nyika, which in places attain an altitude of very nearly 8000 feet.

“A single specimen only was obtained, and this I shot on Cheni-Cheni mountain, quite on the top, at 7400 feet: it is a male, one of a covey of three birds seen at the time.

“Nowhere else in British Central Africa have I come across this bird: it is only found, apparently, at high altitudes, on open grass-land where the grass is no longer than on the Sussex Downs, and away from all human haunts and cultivation.

“So far as I am aware, there is no other country in British Central Africa which exactly resembles the Nyika plateau, to the west of Lake Nyasa: it is quite unique. It is high, bare grass-land, a good deal broken by valleys and smooth-faced gorges, the upper reaches of which are quite bare, the grass being only ankle-high, the soil a light loam. For a great part of the year it is shrouded in mist or misty rain: its climate, therefore, is very moist and always cool, and sometimes positively cold, with, in the cold season, bitter frosts at night.

“Here and there on the topmost ridges are patches of bracken and yellow ragwort, with flowers in profusion all over the place, chiefly gladioli and many kinds of everlastings.

“Lower down are heath-like ‘misata’-trees, weather-worn and bent by the wind; lower still there are clumps of brambles, which at certain times of the year produce most luscious yellow fruit.

“In the bottoms, which are swampy and morass-like, are clear cold streams, which in some instances trace their source from some dark wooded gorge, but more often from a patch of marshy land.

“The Francolins—of which I have only come across the one species—confine themselves to the upper ridges: I have never found them below 7200 feet. They are fairly numerous, but difficult to find without dogs, as they lie close.

“The first intimation I had of their existence in the Nyika mountains was in August 1893, when I picked up some of their feathers on Kasungu mountain, about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  days’ journey N.W. of Cheni-Cheni. A little later I saw a covey high up on Nkalabwi mountain, at about 7500 feet, overlooking the Lumpi river. They are quite the most gamey-looking birds I have seen in British Central Africa; they lie close, and rise with a great whirr, jugging as they fly: they fly at a great pace, and generally take long flights, out of sight, over or round the mountain.

“Their food mainly consists of the white bulbous root of one of the commonest Nyika grasses, but they, of course, also eat insects, though these are not plentiful in Nyika.

“It is usually on the warm sunny sides of the mountains that they pass the daytime, as can be seen from the innumerable places where the roots of the grass have been scratched away by their powerful feet; their nights they spend in the bracken, on, or just below, the topmost ridges of the mountain. The Wanyika, who know this bird well, appear to have no specific name for it; they speak of it as the ‘Kwale,’ which, with slight alterations among some tribes, is the generic name for Francolin throughout all British Central Africa.”

FRANCOLINUS JOHNSTONI, Shelley, Ibis, 1894, p. 24; Ogilvie Grant, 'Game Birds,' i. p. 132 (1895).

Johnston's Francolin is specially interesting as being one of the few members of this large genus in which the male and female differ widely from one another in the colour of their plumage. The latter are, moreover, provided with one or more pairs of powerful spurs, quite as large as those of the male. In the allied *F. hildebrandti*, from East Africa, the sexes were for many years supposed to represent distinct species, the male being called *F. altumi* and the female *F. hildebrandti*, while the fact of the adult female being armed with spurs seemed to favour this opinion. I have, however, already conclusively shown that *F. altumi* and *F. hildebrandti* are merely opposite sexes of the same species.

The males of *F. johnstoni* and *F. hildebrandti* are easily recognized by the differences in the black marking of the underparts, but the females are remarkably alike, both having the breast and belly dull brick-colour.

The habits of these species are no doubt very similar, for we know that *F. hildebrandti* inhabits the dense undergrowth of Mount Kilimanjaro, and is seldom, if ever, to be found in the open.

Mr. Crawshay writes as follows :—

“ The Ocellated Francolin (*F. johnstoni*) is widely distributed through British Central Africa; in wooded districts it is quite as common as Humboldt's Francolin (*Pternistes humboldti*), but from its retiring habits is not so often seen.

“ In its habits and haunts this bird is unique among the Francolins of this part of Africa; it frequents dense thickets and dark forest where the sun scarcely penetrates. Here, amongst the dead leaves, it may be heard making a great rustling and scratching, while searching for the insects which constitute, apparently, its sole food. It does not frequent cultivated land. Rarely is it found in the open, and then only on the very outskirts of the wood or thicket, in the early mornings and late in the evenings, when, if disturbed, it at once either runs or flies into cover. Its call is very striking,

and can be heard a long way off; it is harsh, ear-piercing, and high-pitched, and runs :—‘ Chik-a-chik ! ’—‘ Chik-a-chik ! ’—‘ Chik-a-chik ! ’—‘ Chik-a-chik ! ’—‘ Chik ! ’—‘ Chik ! ’—‘ Chik ! ’—‘ Chik ! ’—the notes being drawn out *longer* and LONGER, and going *higher* and HIGHER, until they terminate in a shrill shriek.

“The Anyanja, and most of the people of the southern part of the Protectorate, know the bird as ‘ Chikwelikwezi ’; the tribes to the north-western half of Lake Nyasa, such as the Wahenga, Wankamanga, and Watumbuka, know it as ‘ Chikweyukweyu ’—both names being derived from the bird’s call.

“From the nature of the cover it frequents, the Ocellated Francolin is not easily shot—I mean it cannot be shot in any great numbers : those I have killed myself have been shot either on the ground or in the trees after they have flown up to roost.

“I have shot many in my time, one here and one there ; but I cannot recollect having ever shot one on the wing.

“Many are the opportunities one has of getting shots at them, when one is waiting-in, or stalking noiselessly through, thick cover—say in search of bush-buck or red river-hogs ; *then*, however, it is not worth one’s while to fire.

“The specimen now presented to the British Museum is a male, shot by myself in a dense belt of scrub in Henga, about 3300 feet altitude, some 3½ days’ journey S.W. of Deep Bay, in June 1895.”

EXCALFACTORIA ADANSONI (Verr.), Ogilvie Grant, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xxii. p. 255 (1893); id. ‘ Game Birds,’ i. p. 197 (1895).

Although Adanson’s Quail is a widely-distributed species, met with all over Africa south of about 5° north latitude, it appears to be everywhere rather rare, though no doubt it is frequently overlooked on account of its very diminutive size.

Mr. Crawshay’s gift includes a male of this species, and is accompanied by the following note :—

“Adanson’s Quail is by no means plentiful in British

Central Africa; I myself have come across very few, and these have been confined to the plateaux west of Lake Nyasa. Some two miles east of Jakwa mountain, Henga, at 3300 feet altitude, I procured two specimens in November, 1895; here, in a dry rush-covered 'pan' (a great resort for wart-hogs), I came upon a bevy of four birds, and shot two, both males.

"Doubtless one must have come across this little Quail before then, but had not paid it any particular attention, and so did not notice anything remarkable about it.

"The fact is, in a country like this part of British Central Africa, where so much other and more desirable game is obtainable, Quail are no temptation to fire a shot, all the more so as one spoils one's chances of something better.

"It is only here and there that one meets with an odd bird or two, usually the large Common Quail (*Coturnix communis*) or another with a reddish-brown breast (*C. delegorguei*), and, of course, the little 'Button' (*Turnix lepida*), which so often falls a victim to the native's stick.

"In an ordinary day's tramp after game it is exceptional to see more than half-a-dozen Quail all told, and these, more often than not, surprise one at odd and inauspicious moments.

"Adanson's Quail, though little or nothing larger than the ordinary 'Button,' has not the same weak and restricted flight; it flies swiftly and strongly, and twists when on the wing after the manner of the larger Quail.

"The natives of the district\* do not appear to know this bird, or at any rate have no other name for it than that by which they call the 'Button,' viz. 'Chizwiri' (not to be confounded with 'Chinziri,' the Manganja word); the Common Quail they know as 'Chimbuwi.'"

BUBO VERREAUXI, Bonap.

*Bubo lacteus*, Sharpe, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. ii. p. 33 (1875).

A fine female example of this rare Owl, together with its egg, was also presented by Mr. Crawshay, and he has

\* "I. e., the Wahenga, Wankamanga, and Watumbuka."—R. C.

supplied me with the following interesting account of its capture:—

“This Owl (*Bubo verreauxi*) was obtained at Emkiseni, about 4000 ft. alt., on the Upper Kasitu river, 5 days’ journey S.W. of Deep Bay, in June 1895. Some account of how it came into my possession may be of interest.

“Having occasion to visit Perembi, one of the most northerly Angoni chiefs, I had camped in a bottom a mile or so below his village—Emkiseni, which is situated on a bare, wind-swept hillside, bitterly cold at this time of year.

“A night in this bottom drove us to seek shelter still lower down to get out of the wind, and we shifted our camp into a clump of huge fig-trees, knotted and gnarled with age and full of hollows.

“Here one of my Wahenga noticed a streak of guano in the mouth of a hollow in one of the trees, and climbing up to it he peered in: he was greeted with a roaring hiss and a glimpse of a pair of eyes gleaming in the darkness of the hollow, and in his terror and hurry to get away he almost fell out of the tree. Another man then went up, prepared to encounter some such bird as an Owl, or perhaps a cat or a genet; and he, after a struggle with the bird, in which he got clawed and bitten, pulled out this Owl and brought her down, she having in her clenched talons the remains of a broken egg. Another egg was taken from the tree intact; this I blew, and found to be addled, as also was the egg broken by the bird.

“I then killed the Owl with a dose of strychnine and skinned her—not, however, without considerable qualms of conscience; she looked plaintively reproachful, almost human, too, with her large dark eyes and pink eyelids.

“A dozen or so of Perembi’s wives watched me at work with interest and awe, sitting humped-up in their cow-hide cloaks in front of my tent. Hundreds of men, too, would have done the same, but were hustled off by my own people to a respectful distance, when they sat down and lined the hillside above us, row upon row.

“The Owl proved to be extraordinarily fat, quite the



fattest bird I have ever seen ; a thick layer of soft white fat covered the whole body.

“ During the two following nights we were at Emkiseni, her mate, poor thing, occupied the fig-tree over my tent, and all night long kept up a booming ‘ Oo-oo,’ deep and full-toned.

“ Judging from the size and powerful talons and beak of this Owl, one would suppose its prey to be tolerably large game. There is no game, however, at Emkiseni, except Guinea-fowl (very plentiful ; I shot three round our camp), a few hares, and a very few Partridges, with here and there an antelope (*Cephalophus* sp. inc.) weighing about 35 lbs. or so, and some very small mammals and snakes.

“ Some of my men told me that this Owl eats caterpillars, but I cannot say whether this is a fact ; they also told me it eats snakes.

“ The Wahenga, Wankamanga, and Watumbuka (who are the *original* inhabitants of this neighbourhood ; the Angoni are their conquerors and hold their country) call this Owl ‘ Kwita ’ ; they regard it, and all Owls, with superstition : they say it is ‘ Chyuni cha uhawi ’ = ‘ A bird of witchcraft ’ ; that, if it perches on a housetop, it forebodes death.”

XLIV.—*Additional Observations on the Birds of the Province of Fohkien*\*. By C. B. RICKETT and J. D. DE LA TOUCHE.  
With Notes by W. R. OGILVIE GRANT.

As some of the birds we have obtained of late are of more or less interest as occurring in this district, we append lists of the same, which we hope may prove of interest.

Last November we sent our native collectors to Kuatun, a village about 270 miles from Foochow, on the mountains at the extreme north-west of this province, and on the borders of that of Kiangsi. The village, according to Père David, stands some 3000–4000 feet above the sea, the mountain it is situated on being some 3000 feet higher and covered with forest.

\* Cf. Ibis, 1892, pp. 400–430 & 477–503 ; and 1894, pp. 215–226.